SUMMARY
RANGEWIDE BONNEVILLE CUTTHROAT TROUT CONSERVATION TEAM MEETING

2002 Field Season Progress Summary

November 7,2002
Salt Lake City, Utah

On November 7,2002 state and federal biologists from Idaho, Nevada and Utah and other stakeholders met to discuss the status of Bonneville cutthroat trout populations and progress made on field projects planned for the 2002 field season (attendance list attached). Attached are summary reports from biologist in Idaho, Nevada, Utah, the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Bureau of Land Management. Additional reports are attached that have been completed since the meeting that provide additional information on conservation projects that were discussed at the meeting.

Forest fires and drought dominated the discussion about losses and negative impacts on Bonneville cutthroat trout populations across the range of this sub-specie. Members of the group were very concerned about fires in Southern Utah and urged the committee chair to draft a letter for the DWR director's signature to the Regional Forester in Region 4 of the U.S. Forest Service expressing concerns about land and fire management programs that are negatively impacting native cutthroat trout populations ***(that*** letter ***was sent in January 2003).***

This was probably the most depressing meeting we have had in recent years on Bonneville cutthroat trout management across its historic range. Despite all the problems related to drought and fires, the conservation efforts to date helped protect populations of Bonneville cutthroat trout. Populations will have to be restored and much more work remains but the hard work of agency biologists and interested stakeholders is paying off to protect and expand cutthroat trout populations. Previous conservation activities are bearing fruit in these difficult times and they demonstrate that ongoing efforts are preventing further loss. They demonstrate that in spite of fires and drought, native cutthroat trout are being protected now and for the future.

Idaho

An agreement has been reached with a landowner to install a fish ladder and screen on a significant fish barrier and diversion on lower Thomas Fork Creek.

There were problems with over-grazing and low water on Dry, Giraffe, and Preuss creeks. Permittees violated grazing policy and changes will be made to livestock numbers within U.S. Forest Service policy. Caribou National Forest personnel are

meeting with grazing Permittees twice a year. Water, or the lack of it, seems to be driving Bonneville cutthroat trout populations in Southwest Idaho. Numbers of young-of-the-year cutthroat trout were down and spawning success and survival of young cutthroat trout was likely negatively affected by continuing severe drought conditions.

The U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management and Idaho Department of Fish and Game worked with Pacificorp on the relicensing of dams and their operation on the Bear River.

Paul Burnett, graduate student from Utah State University, informed the group that the drought and low water in Bear Lake negatively affected the spawning run in St. Charles Creek. There were also problems with poaching of spawning cutthroat trout in the Little Arm of St. Charles Creek in 2002.

Rainbow trout continue to persist in St. Charles Creek even though they haven't been stocked since 1986. Brook and rainbow trout are most prevalent in the upper reaches of St. Charles Creek.

Dick Scully, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, said they would like to get the public, landowners, politicians and agency people together to discuss options to make changes in water management and delivery systems to benefit cutthroat trout spawning migrations and spawning success. A meeting was set up for December 17,2002.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management completed fencing projects on approximately 2 miles of stream on Cottonwood, Cripple and Maple creeks.

Caribou National Forest personnel reported that new grazing standards are being put into the Forest Plan Revision. Jim Capurso said they will have someone present information on the new habitat program at the 2003 spring Bonneville cutthroat trout meeting.

Paul Dremann, Conservation Director for Utah Chapter Trout Unlimited, said he'd like to see a presentation on this new grazing program made to the Friends of Strawberry advisory group.

Nevada

Chris Crookshanks, Nevada Division of Wildlife, reported that drought conditions south of 1-80 were the worst on record or at least the worst in the last 45 years. Most cutthroat trout streams had very low water levels. Some were dry last spring when they would normally be flooding during spring run-off.

Genetic samples were collected from cutthroat trout in Hendrys Creek. Need to determine if Hendrys Creek fish are pure and how they relate to other populations in Nevada.

A very large population (1200 fish/mi) in Goshute Creek was almost lost due to a flash flood. Only 12 fish were found after the flood. Hopefully they can repopulate and restore this Bonneville cutthroat trout population.

Smith and Deadman creeks were chemically renovated a few years ago. Both streams now have very strong populations with several year classes. The populations are well distributed throughout available habitat. These populations are now considered "established."

Population estimates will be completed on cutthroat populations in 2003.

Nevada has not completed their Conservation Agreement for Bonneville cutthroat trout.

Great Basin National Park: A complete summary of activities within the Park is attached.

On a treatment of Upper Snake Creek, NPS personnel found that Antimycin broke down with every 60 foot change in elevation rather than every 250 foot drop in elevation as predicted. Biologists plan to monitor macro-invertebrates for two years within the treated area.

A total of 34 Bonneville cutthroat trout were transplanted fiom Mill Creek to Strawberry Creek. There is five miles of habitat within Great Basin National Park and 2 additional miles outside the Park.

Bonneville cutthroat trout spawning was documented in Mill Creek fiom June 26" to July 3rd. Attempts to incubate eggs failed due to low flows and sediment.

A multipass electrofishing survey was completed on South Fork Big Wash. Fish introduced in 2000 had reproduced and grown very well since their introduction. A flash flood in late September washed a lot of sediment into the stream. Large adult fish survived the flood.

Rainbow trout are being physically removed from the upper meadow area of the South Fork of Baker Creek. Brook trout have not been able to move above a barrier. Eight rainbow trout have been removed above the bamer and efforts will continue for two more years before cutthroat trout are transplanted into this area.

Bonneville cutthroat trout work is going well in Great Basin National Park and their ultimate goal is to have cutthroats in 13 miles of stream.

Utah

Southern GMU

A big discussion took place about a prescribed burn on the Dixie National Forest that got out of control and bumed 70,000 acres. The bum affected four streams including Deep Creek that contained a remnant population of Bonneville cutthroat trout. Utah Division of Wildlife personnel were notified on June 13 and they traveled to Deep Creek on June 14. Plans had been made to move fish to Ten Mile Creek and biologists hoped that some fish had survived the fire. Many dead fish were evident as well as 6 inches of sediment that had blown into the stream fiom winds during the fire or just fiom the fire. The fire stopped it's downstream burning at the BLM/USFS boundary line. The upper most surviving fish were found about 1/3 mile below the end of the bum.

Attempts were made on June 21 to capture and transplant fish to Ten Mile Creek. Water temperatures rose quickly during the middle of the day and approximately 60 of 268 fish captured died. Efforts to collect more fish were abandoned due to temperature stress. The remaining fish were transplanted to Ten Mile Creek. Another attempt was made to move more fish July 1 but the remaining fish were isolated in one pool and were in a very stressed condition. From both attempts a total of 248 Bonneville cutthroat trout were moved to Ten Mile Creek.

A rainstorm on July 17 killed all remaining fish in three streams as well as several miles of the East Fork of the Sevier River.

Deep Creek was 14 miles outside the Worst Case Scenario during fire planning. It was 9 miles fiom the fire before the fire got out of control.

The group urged that a letter be sent to the Regional Forester over Region 4 expressing concerns over the way the USFS handled this fire and the need for Aquatic Personnel to be included in fire planning and fighting efforts.

Luckily, good conservation efforts and planning had a new stream ready for the surviving Bonneville cutthroat trout to be transplanted into. Dale Hepworth's hard work in Southern Utah paid off and saved the complete loss of the Deep Creek population. Hopefully fish transferred to Ten Mile Creek will reproduce and supply fish for transplant back into Deep Creek when the habitat recovers. Plans are to introduce Bonneville cutthroat trout into two other streams that bumed during the Sanford Fire on Mount Dutton.

Another fire and drought on the Pine Valley Mountains may have wiped out three Bonneville cutthroat trout populations. Leads Creek did not bum and that population can be used to restock the affected populations. This entire area will be surveyed in 2003.

Another big discussion covered concerns over practices of moving water, mud, aquatic vegetation, etc across drainages during fire fighting efforts. There hasn't been any

concern until now about sucking water, mud and vegetation out of one drainage and dumping it into other drainages that are burning. With the concerns over Whirling Disease and nuisance or invasive species it has become a big concern for aquatic biologists that water and organisms not be moved from drainage to drainage without careful review. These concerns were raised in Southern Utah during a fire near Fish Lake where Whirling Disease and Eurasian Milfoil are found. Fire fighting agencies need to take these concerns into consideration when moving water and equipment across drainages and state lines to fight fires. Those agencies need to set up plans to address these issues.

A total of 369,000 Bonneville cutthroat trout eggs were taken from spawners at Manning Meadow Reservoir. This is more eggs than needed for conservation efforts and part of those fish are being stocked into reservoirs managed for sport fishing.

Central Region

All streams on the East Slope of the Deep Creek Mountains now contain Bonneville cutthroat trout. Two streams on the West Slope need to be renovated and that work should be completed by 2004.

Paul Cowley, Wasatch-Cache National Forest, reported that a new population of Bonneville cutthroat trout has been found in the Mill Creek drainage. He also reported that a fire in the headwaters of Deaf Smith Creek is of concern for the cutthroat trout lower in that drainage.

The Central Utah Water Conservancy District is taking over control of Red Butte Reservoir and there are concerns that some members of that group favor managing the reservoir entirely as a June sucker refugia. Russ Finley, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, feels that there are enough members on the advisory committee that Bonneville cutthroat trout will remain a part of the management in the reservoir and drainage above it.

Northern Region

The Wasatch-Cache National Forest has put new guidelines on all cutthroat trout populations into the draft Forest Management Plan. An EA or EIS will be required for all projects that may potentially impact cutthroat trout populations.

Paul Cowley reported on a fire that burned part of North Slope of Uinta Mountains. A total of 10,000 acres actually burned and 15,000 acres were impacted. Rehab money was used to replace culverts that were acting as barriers to cutthroat trout movement. Paul Cowley was pulled into the Fire Evaluation Team. In some areas, roads were pulled away from streams.

In the Logan River drainage, the USFS continues to move roads and camping areas away from the stream and riparian areas. A "ford" on the Left Hand Fork of the Blacksmith Fork was hardened. A 4-foot culvert was partially buried and cement was poured over it

so at high flows water could flow over the top and vehicles fording the stream would be traveling on cement.

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources biologists still have many streams that need initial surveys. The Northern Region Office is close to completing all surveys in the lower Bear River drainage (Logan and Blacksmith Fork drainages). The landowner on Davenport Creek wouldn't let state biologists do surveys in 2002. They will try again with help from the local Conservation Officer in 2003.

A survey on Yellow Creek found a previously unknown population of Bonneville cutthroat trout, leatherside chubs and boreal toads. Biologists were very excited about the discovery of this native species complex.

Am Berglund, Bureau of Land Management, says that the USFS and BLM need to work closer together to coordinate grazing on adjoining lands. Attached is a summary of BLM activities in Utah for 2002.

A summary of USFS activities is also attached.

Three reports covering spawning population management and egg taking are attached that have been completed since our November 2002 meeting.